

Movie Makers

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The American Motion Picture Society

Sponsors of the oldest continuing Film/video Festival in the world.

Why Did It Win? Why Did It Lose? II

Matt Jenkins

As promised, here is the article examining comments from festivals that either rejected or accepted my last production.

"B and Below: We're Not in Hollywood Anymore" is a documentary profiling three low/no-budget movie makers: Pat Bishow of Amusement Films, Steve Bentley of Dark Talisman Productions, and Richard Catt of Cattskill Productions.

This 48 minute documentary was shot on SONY DVCAM and edited on an AVID DV. The program contains the directors on-camera comments regarding various topics combined with clips from their productions. An on-camera narrator serves to introduce and close the documentary.

However, the bulk of the documentary is in the participants' own words.

The documentary aired on 8 television stations and cable channels. It was entered into 11 festivals. It was rejected from 8, accepted into one and two are still in limbo. It was profiled on the Internet radio show "B+ Movie Making" and in the national magazine "Videoscope."

The festival that "B and Below" was accepted into was the Dahlonga International Film Festival. According to its web site, the Dahlonga International Film Festival or DIFF is "unique as it brings together the concept of a totally filmmaker-friendly festival with the beautiful setting of Dahlonga, Georgia - the site of America's first gold rush." The prescreening

team, led by Dean Treadway of the cable channel TNT called this documentary "perfect" for the festival.

This documentary was also favorably reviewed by the magazine "Videoscope." "Videoscope" is published by Joe Kane, video columnist for the "New York Daily News." Some of the comments include calling the documentary "well produced," and "interesting and entertaining."

Now for the rejections.

The first competition that "B and Below" was rejected from was the Broadcast Education Association Juried Production Competition. This competition is only open to college professors who produce programming. The competition was started as a venue for

(Continued on page 4)

inside...

**Technical
Sound Editing
Convention!!
From the Editor**

**page 2
page 3
page 6
page 7**

Movie Makers

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George W. Cushman
Founder,
1909- 1996

Matt Jenkins, Editor

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TECHNICAL

Jim Beach

This feature article in a recent newspaper caught my eye as I remember the days when the VHS video format was competing with Betamax for dominance in the consumer electronics video market. I expect that many of you remember as well how some favored Betamax from Sony and others favored VHS from JVC, Panasonic and many other Japanese electronics manufacturers.

Betamax produced a slightly higher quality video image but, alas, VHS won the buying public's favor mostly because of price and ready availability from a multitude of different brands using the same VHS format. The ability to edit the sound tracks more easily was a factor as well.

I came into the home video scene in 1986 and by that time VHS dominance was apparent. My first camcorder was a VHS made by JVC. This was fortunate as it soon became apparent that Betamax was going the way of the dinosaurs, the Edsel and eight-track audio.

By Yuri Kageyama -- Associated Press

YOKOHAMA, Japan -- In the courtyard of a dingy electronics factory, several hundred

workers in blue uniforms huddle together to form the letters "V," "H," and "S" that can be clearly read from above.

Cameras are rolling on. The rooftop of the Victor Co. of Japan (JVC) plant, shooting the climactic scene from "The Sun Will Rise Again?" a film about how a relatively small Japanese company went onto beat mighty Sony Corp.'s Betamax and develop the world standard for the home video machine.

The story of VHS, which stands for "video home system," is 30 years old. But it is striking a chord with Japan today when this nation has lost much of its confidence of the past, having battled a decade-long economic downturn that has worsened in the past year.

Crushed by the global slump and competition from Asian rivals, Japan's electronics powerhouses, including Victor's parent, Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. are sinking into deep losses.

R20; Maybe, the victory of those times can help rekindle energy today," said Hideo Shimizu, a 48 year old Victor worker who was thrilled to play his little part, helping make the letter "S."

The scene described above is based on a real-life event at Victor, the company famous for the emblem of the dog lis-

(Continued on page 6)

Sound Editing

WALT GILMORE

The more I edit the more I find that the sound track is the most interesting and creative part of the process. Not all video is (nor should it be) just putting in the sound that you got when you were recording the picture, in fact often that sound is often bad – too soft, distorted, not consistent in volume or with a disturbing background noise. All these problems developed with the very first use of sound for films, once the filmmakers and audience ceased to be amazed by the excitement of just getting a recording of noise with their pictures.

The solution to these problems has generally been to replace the actual sound with carefully recorded studio sound to replace the "live" sound of the original. With computer assisted editing, either NLE or analog, we can all use the same tricks the pros have known for years.

We have all used replacement sound for narration, and background music. But there are three other types of replacement sound that can improve the sound track: they are **sound effects** or "foley sound," **dialog replacement** and **pre-recorded music** (and song).

A sound editor named Foley is credited with first recording synchronized effects to replace the "natural" sound in a film. These sounds include such things as footsteps, scissors' snips, door slams, etc. Foley artists today record footsteps, for example, by using a variety of different shoes on different floor surfaces while watching the film action and matching the movements on the screen. The new sounds are then added to the edited sound track.

In the same way, the pros have actors watch their performance (or even someone else's) and rerecord the dialog one phrase at a time to replace bad "live" sound. Remember Debbie Reynolds replacing "Lena Lamont's" nasal, "bad" voice in **"Singing In The Rain"**?

Prerecorded music has made big production numbers possible in films since the beginning of musicals as it is not possible to match the sound rhythm, volume and quality from take to take — and you can't easily get an orchestra, singers, dancers, cameras, lights and everything else on one stage for filming. So using prerecorded "perfect" sound tracks with the best musicians and singers for the on-camera performers to lip-sync while filming, is an old trick.

For our newest one-

minute video I chose a beautiful park, next to a freeway. The sound was terrible. Because most of the dialog is voice over thoughts we pre-recorded the dialog before shooting. After the "inner voice" lines were recorded close to the "mic", I had the actress step back and record the "live" lines as if she were outside calling or talking to someone. At the shoot we recorded sound and picture normally but in editing I set in the prerecorded tracks and slid them back and forth to match the lip movements in the picture.

Then I had beautiful dialog and picture but it was not natural because there was no other sound on the track. Next, I added the sound of a running brook the match the stream in the picture and the sound of birds, both from a royalty free effects CD. Then I added a music track allowing a few seconds for the "natural" sounds to register. The result a beautiful picture and beautiful "natural" sound!

I know most of us do not worry about stereo but with more and more TVs having stereo and with more people setting up "home theatres" which have surround sound; we will be wanting our sound tracks to be like the pros. Why not? — Stereo is available on most of our equipment and can be easily used now.

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 1)

those professors who produce product instead of publish research. In the early years of this competition, professional production people served as judges. Now the BEA indicates that professors are selected as judges.

Three judges reviewed the documentary. There is no other information regarding these judges. In fact the judging sheet stipulates that the judges will NOT put their names on the judging sheets as the sheet may be returned to the entrant.

The BEA judging sheet had five categories: aesthetics/creativity, technical, structure/timing, professionalism, and production values. Each area was graded on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being excellent. The scores were then added up to total a possible 50 points. "Band Below's" scores were 26, 34, and 38 out of 50.

The judge that awarded "B and Below" a dismal 26 out of 50 points also wrote extensive notes. The other two judges only offered brief comments. Here are some of this judge's comments and my comments in response. The judge's comments are in italics.

No real open.

I'm not sure what is meant here as the documentary opens with comments from

the three movie makers followed by a voice open introduction as to what the documentary is about and then the title credits.

Using graphics as transitions weak.

This judge goes on and on about the *endless graphics that aren't up long enough.*

Yet the judge scored this area an 8. I wanted to minimize the use of the narrator and allow the directors to speak as much as possible. Each director offers comments on specific topics. Therefore the graphics are essential to introduce the viewer to each topic that the directors will be commenting about.

This judge also did not like the on-camera interviews at all.

Head cuts should never drive the product.

My dilemma in producing "B and Below" was that I wanted to intersperse with the interview with clips from the directors' movies. If I changed the clips in any fashion such as through adding a voice over narration, I believe this would alter the director's production. And I didn't want to do that. Therefore you see the director and hear the director and then experience the clip.

While two of the judges indicated that the topic was interesting, the only other com-

ments were that the production was "choppy" and this statement:

A filmic approach to video hampered by some technical limitations in two key interviews.

While the meaning of the first part of this statement escapes me, I will submit that there were technical limitations.

However, this judge does not elaborate on what these limitations are. The one judge that wrote profusely faulted the lighting, the framing and felt the pacing was too slow.

In defense of lighting, much of the on-camera interviews were shot on-location as things were occurring and bringing in lights or make-up was not an option. I paid attention to contrast and felt I did a good job here. I'm not sure about the poor framing complaint as I thought the camera framing was fine for this production.

This brings us to our second festival rejection that came with comments. The festival was the Rochester International Film Festival held by the Movies on a Shoe String Organization. According to its web site: "The Rochester International Film Festival, the oldest continuously-held short film festival in the world, has been presented each year since 1959 by Movies

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

on a Shoestring, Inc. Each festival includes a wide variety of original and imaginative works by film students, advanced amateurs, and professional filmmakers from all over the world...Movies on a Shoestring, Inc. is an independent, non-profit, all-volunteer organization."

I was not supplied with actual judges sheets but was provided with a letter containing general statements. In reading the letter the comments were highly complimentary. In fact so complimentary I wonder why it was rejected. The only negative comment was that wind noise was present in one of the interviews. I agree. This particular interview was shot outdoors in Oklahoma in spring. And what is present out doors in Oklahoma in the spring? THE WIND. I thought I did pretty well considering the wind problems. Yet none of the judges in the BEA competition brought any audio problems up.

So why did DIFF select "B and Below" for "Official competition?" Why did "Videoscope" magazine give a favorable review to this documentary? I have to believe that it was content.

The "Videoscope" reviewer makes one negative point:

The basic theme of this documentary is that Hollywood spends way too much money

making movies and looks down on independent producers, fearing that the secret will get out-namely, that there's a lot of fat in those multi-million dollar production budgets, or as the text on the video box describes it 'a whole culture of moviemaking exists outside the mainstream-corporate-mass-mediated-entertainment industry.' Perhaps director Jenkins overstates the point. I very much doubt Bishow is attempting to topple boogeyman corporate empire with films about Mexican wrestlers and judo-chopping femmes.

And that's my point. Maybe these judges did not like the premise of low-budget producers as a viable entertainment alternative.

In any case I will pack up my copies of "Videoscope" magazine and head for the Georgia Hills for the Dahlonia International Film Festival. If you happen to be in the area my documentary "B and Below: We're Not In Hollywood Anymore" will show on June 29th at 2:30 PM in the Holly Basement.



(Continued from page 3)

The Production Sound Report (www.locationsound.com), a free newsletter from Location Sound Corp., 10639 Riverside Dr. N. Hollywood, has an article in the newest issue, which reports on the current film and TV methods for recording STEREO sound tracks.

Because of the method of transmitting NTSC television format, the use of spaced, left and right, mono microphones will not work. This was the way we were taught about stereo recording in the fifties (remember the Broadway cast albums with duets sung from opposite sides of the stage in your old stereo headsets?). Because of the way the sound is transmitted the stereo left and right tracks, recorded in this way, cancel each other out.

So the recommended method is to use "coincident" M-S or X-Y, single unit, stereo microphones. This is what we have on our camcorders. Because it is often impossible to create a proper stereo balance when recording dialog, all dialog and synchronized sound effects are recorded monaural and mixed to left and right in editing. Only the non-synchronized effects, ambience and music are done in stereo recordings.

Isn't that great... the easiest way to do stereo soundtracks is the right way!

(Continued from page 2)

tening with a cocked head to a recording of its master's voice. The human letters were created in praise of section chief Shizuo Takano, fondly remembered at Victor as "Mr. VHS."

The VHS saga has inspired many in Japan. The story was an episode for a recent hit TV show about the heroes of Japan's industrialization. The new film is set for release in Japan in June.

"The film shows both the limitations and the potential of the individual," said Masaaki Sato, who wrote the book on which the film is based. "It's all about people, and that hasn't changed."

Those who remember Takano say he was the perfect boss unpretentious, hard-working and passionate. He despised favoritism and office politics. Before the arrival of VHS Takano's section had been branded as outcasts "by-the-window," the Japanese phrase for has been, unproductive employees.

Takano, then 47, knew his section was doomed, bleeding losses from a disastrous industrial model of the videotape recorder that was flooding the company with complaints from clients. Pressures were high for job cuts.

Takano took his last chance. He chose a handful of engineers to secretly begin devel-

oping the platform for a consumer video deck although the common wisdom those days was that no one could beat Sony.

In 1975, Sony's Betamax video recorder went on sale, beating VHS by a year. But Sony was not as open with sharing its technology with rival companies as was Takano, who believed the standard had to become widespread if Victor hoped to win in the long run.

Sony's mistake proved fatal and it lost the video format war. The technology used in the millions of video recorders around the world is Victor's. And Takano did it all, admirers say, without laying off a single worker.

Ken Watanabe, the actor who plays Takano's initially skeptical sidekick, says the message is that every ordinary employee has a crack at a dream.

"All people have that potential," Watanabe said. "This is the drama of how people worked hard to overcome a wall. We're facing a new wall now, and it's telling us to return to our roots."

Whether the success of VHS can be replayed remains dubious.

Japan's years of growth that accompanied modernization are over. Consumer needs

(Continued on page 8)

CONVENTION!!

Roger Garretson

One of the most exciting events in amateur video making will occur between the days of October 10th and October 13th. That event is the joint convention of AMPS, AMMA and Ten Best of the West.

This year's convention will be held in San Diego at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel. This luxurious facility even has a theater where the entries from the contests hosted by the sponsoring organizations will be shown. In addition to showing the winning videos, as many other entries as possible will be shown too.

The organizers have already obtained several speakers to enlighten us in addition to viewing the entries.

Perhaps one of the most enjoyable aspects of the convention is the opportunity to meet with other video or filmmakers and just "talk shop." Those of you who belong to a video club will know what I mean when we tell of how we enjoy just discussing how we make videos. "What kind of camera did you use?" "How did you edit your video?" "Where did you shoot those beautiful scenes?" Imagine your enjoyment when you can do this with folks from all over the country!

Registration forms will be included in the next issue of the Movie Maker, but reserve those dates to attend.

See you in San Diego!!

From The Editor

There's only room for an abbreviated "From the

Editor" Column in this issue. The series of judging articles authored by George Cushman will continue in the next issue.

Summer time is quickly approaching. I am gearing up for three big documentaries. One is over the printing museum in Guthrie, Oklahoma. Should you ever plan to come to Oklahoma be sure to make Guthrie a stop, it will be well worth it. The second is over the sculptor Paul Moore. He

is a generous and wonderful artist who is creating the world's largest free standing bronze sculpture to be placed in Oklahoma City. And the third is over the atomic sub Nautilus. My summer plans to be a busy one.

As always you may e-mail me with your questions and comments at mattj@cameron.edu.

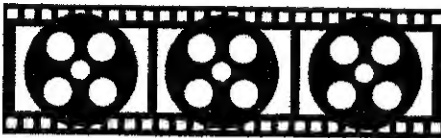
Upcoming Festivals

Close Date	Festival Name and address for forms	Open to:	Subject	Format	Time Limit	Entry Fee	Award	Show Dates
6/8/02	Cotswold Int'l Film & Video Festival 2002, c/o Lee Prescott, C.I.F.V.F., P.O BOX 64, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire, GL10 2YH, England, UK <i>Forms are available via the internet <www.cotswoldfilmvideofest.co.uk></i>	A,B,E	Open	HJMNO PQ in Pal M-Ntsc	20 Min-B 30 min-A	\$11 A \$7 B \$16 E	TU	Sept 13/14, 2002
7/27/02	PSA, obtain forms from Jerry Turk at < gwturk@swbell.net >	A	Open	M	20 Min	\$10/tape	V W	Sept 3/7, '02
8/31/02	73 rd American Int'l Film and Video Festival, 30 Kanan Rd, Oak Park, CA 91377 or on the web at www.angelfire.com/movies/amps	ABC	Open	HJMNO PQ	15 Min	\$10 xx 15 yy	V W	Oct 10-12 '02
9/12/02	Ten Best of the West, % Eldon Garretson, 3702 Albatross, San Diego CA 92103 (Open to people residing w/o Mississippi River)	A	Open	HJMNO PQ	15 min	\$10	V	Oct 10-13 '02
8/13/02	AMMA Int'l Amateur Motion Picture Festival, % Bob Makara, 264 Hamilton Court, Grosse Pointe Farms, MI 48236	A	Open	HJMNO PQ	20 min	\$10xx, \$15 yy	VWU	Oct 10-13 '02
N/A Not Announced or not available								
A Amateur B College Student C Hi Sch or Grade School	D Independent E Professional F Restricted	G Open	H S 8 J 16mm K Other L 3/4" M VHS	N SVHS O 8mmvid P Hi 8 Q MiniDV	R Regional S exceptions T Cash U Trophies	V Certificates W Other Award X Approximate Y It varies	xx Members yy Non Member zz	

(Continued from page 6)

have shifted from basic home appliances to more sophisticated products.

And with the advent of DVD, the bulkier video is rapidly growing obsolete. Victor workers are the first to admit they must continue to lead in new technologies.



Visit the website at:

**www.angelfire.
com/movies/
amps**

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